DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 185 032 SP 015 823

AUTHOR Ishler, Richard E.
TITLE Institutional Planning for a Declining Enrollment.
PUB DATE Jul 79
NOTE 13p.: Paper presented at the International Conference on Improving Higher Education (5th, London, England, July 1979).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS College Attendance; *Colleges; *Declining Enrollment; Enrollment Influences; Enrollment Trends; *Higher Education; *Long Range Planning; School Holding Power

ABSTRACT

Many institutions of higher education are being faced with declining enrollments accompanied by a reduction in human and financial resources. As a result, long-range planning has become imperative. This paper discusses how the planning process evolved and was conducted at Emporia State University in order to cope with the projected enrollment decline over the next five years. Included are a discussion of the factors and conditions which instigated the planning, the development of the plan, faculty involvement, and a discussion of the components which are included in each department's plan. (Author)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED185032

INSTITUTIONAL PLANNING FOR A DECLINING ENROLLMENT

by

Richard E. Ishler

Dean, School of Education and Psychology

Emporia State University

Emporia, Kansas 66801

Telephone: Office - (316) 343-1200

Home - (316) 342-1190

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Richard E. Ishler

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Richard E. Ishler is a specialist in educational administration and eleme tary education by training and in academic planning by experience. This paper was presented at the Fifth International Conference on Improving Higher Education held in London, England in July, 1979.

SP015 823

INSTITUTIONAL PLANNING FOR A DECLINING ENROLLMENT

Richard E. Ishler
Emporia State University

Abstract

Many institutions of higher education are being faced with declining enrollments accompanied by a reduction in human and financial resources. As a result, long-range planning has become imperative. This paper discusses how the planning process evolved and was conducted at Emporia State University in order to cope with the projected enrollment decline over the next five year period. Included are a discussion of the factors and conditions which instigated the planning, the process used to plan for the planning, faculty involvement, and a discussion of the components which are included in each department's plan.

INSTITUTIONAL PLANNING FOR A DECLINING ENROLLMENT

Richard E. Ishler
Emporia State University

Introduction

Most institutions of higher education have in the past had task forces on long range planning. Such planning was called for by various accrediting bodies as well as by certain state and federal educational agencies. Furthermore, long range planning was considered to be an expectation of academicians and was viewed as one of the indicators of a forward looking educational institution. Unfortunately, this kind of academic planning was seen as a pro forma exercise by the reluctant faculty and administrators who were involved. As a result, lengthy documents were often produced and placed on the presidents' shelves where they collected dust.

In the days of burgeoning enrollments the type of academic planning described above was sufficient and, in fact, frequently went unnoticed by busy faculty and administrators who were preoccupied with problems brought about by growing enrollments. Events of recent years however, have brought about an increasing need for planning in higher education. The growing tax revolt, the demand for accountability, coupled with declining enrollments make it more imperative to plan ahead but also make long range planning much more difficult. All institutions of higher education are now facing, or will soon be confronted with, the common problem of fewer students and, hence, fewer financial resources. Thus, all must plan for the future. A quote from Ecclesiastes seems germane: "Without vision the people will perish."

The planning process needs to be clearly understood by all faculty and administrators and a set of guidelines needs to be established. The guidelines should be broad enough to allow for the uniqueness of the various academic units. One set of guidelines which can be used is as follows:

1. Planning Should Be Participative - A steering committee needs to guide the planning process but all who will be affected by the decisions reached as a result of planning must have an opportunity to be involved.
2. Planning Should Be Systematic - A basic strategy and time schedule must be developed. Most universities have on their faculties persons who are experts in planning. If not, outside consultants from the business world or from educational institutions can be helpful at this stage of the planning process.
3. Planning Should Be Integrative - The persons involved in the planning process must perceive their individual units as just a part, albeit an important part, of the total institution and this attitude must be reflected in their planning.
4. Planning Should Be Action Oriented - For each statement of an objective which comes out of the plan there should be a determination of priority, the designation of a responsible party, a strategy for implementation, and a time schedule for accomplishment.
5. Planning Should Be Kept Simple - The plan which is finally produced should be one which is implementable. As such, it should state fairly simply (a) what needs to be done, (b) who is going to do it, (c) how it will be done, and (d) when it will be done.
6. Planning Should Be Flexible - Plans are formulated to facilitate the accomplishment of desired outcomes. Long range planning is becoming increasingly difficult due to unexpected changes which occur. The best alternative seems to be to plan for a five year period with provisions for revision at least every two years.

A Model For Planning

The remainder of this paper will describe the process which was used at Emporia State University in the development of a five year plan for the insti-

tution. Included are a discussion of the factors and conditions which instigated the planning, the process used, faculty involvement, and the components which were included in each department's plan. The model described may very well be appropriate for use by other institutions of higher education both in the United States and elsewhere in the world.

Early in the Fall, 1978, semester the president announced the need to impose a set of contingency guidelines as a result of a smaller enrollment than had been predicted or budgeted for in the 1978-79 academic year. Because, in Kansas, state supported universities are allocated faculty positions based on the previous year's student credit hour generation, we found ourselves in an "overstaffed" situation and in danger of losing 16 full-time faculty positions for the following fall. This situation prevailed in spite of the fact that the Fall, 1979 enrollment might increase. The president's contingency guidelines called for a freeze on hiring, administrative reorganization, increased emphasis on recruiting of students, more off-campus programming, and most importantly, for the development of a five year academic plan for the University. Such a plan, stated the president, will contain our best judgment as to (1) how the University can promote and protect both the integrity and the viability of its programs and mission; (2) how it can make wise and humane decisions regarding the employment of its personnel; and (3) how it can make the most effective use of its total resources during the next five year period. The president further stated that the five year plan would be implemented at the beginning of the 1979-80 academic year.

At Emporia State University there are four academic schools each with a dean or director. They are the Schools of Applied Arts and Sciences, Education and Psychology, Liberal Arts and Sciences, and Library Science. The president's directive went on to say, that each School and each department within the School shall project enrollment figures for a five year period. Projections may

include (1) a reasonably optimistic figure based on what each department anticipates it could accomplish with current resources if its plans and aspirations are fulfilled, and (2) a reasonably cautious figure based on what each department may experience if current enrollment trends continue and if the same percentage of the total student credit hour production is maintained. As a result, then, the president further asked that each dean prepare a detailed plan showing what modifications might logically be made in the missions, programs, and personnel of each department in the School.

The Academic Leadership Council, chaired by the academic vice president and composed of the deans, a Faculty Senate representative, and a Student Senate representative, met to discuss the strategy to be used in following the president's directive to develop a five year plan. After much discussion regarding the need for a common format to be followed, it was decided that since each School was different it would be difficult for each to use the same format. Thus, each School was given freedom to develop its own outline to use but the following premises and assumptions were agreed to for the planning activity:

1. Emporia State University's mission as part of the Kansas Board of Regents System will remain the same, that of serving as a regional institution with a long tradition in certain academic fields, namely teacher education.
2. The University will place high priority on planning and maintaining excellence in undergraduate and graduate programs.
3. Each department and School will include in their plans an enrollment projection based on their continuing to produce the same percentage of the total student credit hours as they now generate. An alternate plan can be developed showing what might occur if the optimistic predictions concerning the future in their specific fields become a reality.

4. An important resource for data would be the report of the Task Force on Institutional Planning which had recently submitted its report after two and a half years of work.
5. The characteristics of the faculty will not change during the five year period except that an increasing number will be tenured and the average age will increase.
6. There are several variables that will continue to affect the academic plan and the planning process which are difficult to predict, such as the appropriations from the state; the climate in the state in relationship to citizens' attitudes toward higher education; formula funding; enrollment patterns; student interests and choices; faculty curriculum decisions; the changing job market for graduates; and new academic ideas and planning.

It was further agreed that regardless of the format or outline used in each School, the following components would be included as they relate to each department:

1. Statement of the Mission - Using the University Mission Statement as a guide, each School should develop its own mission statement and specific objectives. Departments, then, should identify their goals and objectives, as they relate to the School's mission.
2. Review of Departmental Programs - Each department should review and assess its programs in terms of the following characteristics:
   (a) Student interest and demand as indicated by patterns of enrollment for the past four years and the prediction for the next five years.
   (b) Changes in emphasis or direction which the department deems feasible for the future.
   (c) Centrality of the program to the University mission.

(d) Quality appraisal including internal subjective assessment as well as external evaluations of programs.

(e) Vitality of the program including a review of the goals, clientele served, educational experiences offered, service activities rendered, educational methods employed, and use of resources.

(f) Uniqueness of the program in terms of content, students served, educational methods used, and as it relates to programs in other institutions.

(g) Effectiveness of resource utilization including faculty, staff, financial support, library and learning resources, physical facilities used, and other institutional services needed to achieve the goals of the program.

3. Assessment of Academic Program Priorities - The case for continuation or modification or improvement should be made and a priority assigned to each academic program or function.

4. Analysis of Staffing Needs - A review of the staffing requirements should be made for each program and should include an analysis of tenure flexibility, academic expertise, temporary appointments, graduate assistants, and student help.

The above components comprise the common core for each School's five year plan. In the School of Education and Psychology, where the writer is the dean, the Administrative Council composed of the dean, the department chairpersons, the associate dean, and a faculty representative, served as the steering committee for the development of the School's report. The Administrative Council spent two days in a retreat setting and created an outline for each department to follow in the development of its five year plan. Since the academic plans of the departments would need to relate one to the other, and because the School

plan would need to synthesize these relationships, it seemed most appropriate for a common outline and format to be used.

Departments organized in various ways to begin their planning but a common denominator was total faculty involvement. A few key faculty members in each department were given major responsibilities but all were involved to some degree from conceptualization to the final approval stage. After all, they were in effect planning their own destiny. Thus, other personal responsibilities were temporarily set aside during the three month departmental planning process and full attention was given to this important activity.

The basic components which each department included in its plan were as follows:

1. Goals and Objectives - A statement of goals and objectives was developed which related the department's goals and objectives to the School mission statement.
2. Enrollment Projections - Data were collected for use in speculating about future enrollments in the various programs offered by the department. These data were then used to project enrollments for five years based on anticipated changes or conditions in society and in the department's particular field of study. Such conditions were reflected in an enrollment projection which was optimistic and in another which was based on a steady state situation.
3. Academic Programs - This aspect of the departmental plan was deemed to be the most important and, thus, called for the most extensive analysis. First, a rationale had to be developed for each program. Why was the program needed? What was the student demand for it? Was it a program which professional accrediting agencies said was necessary? Was it required for certification of educational personnel? Would the enrollment projections justify its existence? Second, a complete set

of competencies was developed for each program which each student who completes the program will be able to demonstrate. These competencies include knowledges, skills, and attitudes. Third, each department was required to review the frequency of its course offerings and to indicate what the schedule of course offerings will be if the optimistic enrollment projections are realized and what it will be if the alternate projections become a reality. Fourth, each program was completely analyzed and its status was determined as one which should be continued, modified, added to, or dropped. Finally, the departments described the kinds of evaluations which each program would undergo during the next five years. These included self-studies, student evaluations, Graduate School review, as well as formal reviews to be made by the various accrediting agencies which set the standards for the particular programs.

4. Off-Campus Instruction - Declining enrollments on campus have forced departments to take many of their course offerings to field sites in order to attract more students. The five year plan included ways each department would develop new field sites, create a demand for their programs, and what enticements could be offered to encourage faculty members to become involved in off-campus instruction.

5. Research - Each department examined ways to increase research activities within their fields and explored procedures which might be used to release faculty to carry out research functions as part of their regular loads.

6. Service - More and more school districts are requesting professional services from faculty which do not generate any student credit hours. Each department is involved to some extent in providing these activities and their five year plans included an assessment of their

capabilities of providing these services in the future.

7. Outside Funding - This component of the five year plan is elusive but the departments were able to speculate about the possibilities for funded projects based on their track records to date.

8. Facilities and Equipment - Each department identified as best it could the materials, equipment, and facilities which would be needed to carry out its existing programs as well as any new ones which might evolve over the five year period.

9. Recruitment of Students - Recruitment is viewed by all departments as being one of their functions. Thus, each department described ways in which it could assist the Admission's Office in recruiting as well as planning activities designed specifically to recruit students for its programs.

10. Departmental Organization - The organizational structure of the department and the School either facilitates or impedes progress toward carrying out the institution's mission. Each department reviewed its current organizational configuration and made suggestions for changes over the next five years.

11. Staffing Needs - The final and, undoubtedly most important component of the department's five year plan was staffing. Based on the other components, each department assessed its future staffing needs in terms of number of faculty and support personnel required to deliver the departmental programs which will be in existence at the end of the planning period.

The departmental plans were then compiled into a School of Education and Psychology report. All four Schools compiled similar reports which were then synthesized into a University Five Year Plan. The task was formidable and challenging but the result is that Emporia State University has developed a plan

which will guide important decision making for the next five years. Decisions which are made regarding academic programs and staffing will not shock or threaten the faculty because they participated in the systematic planning process. They know what lies ahead because they helped to plan for the future of Emporia State University and, in a real sense, shaped their own destiny.